

Got old phones? Here's how to reuse, recycle or sell them

September 14 2017, by Barbara Ortutay



In this Friday, Sept. 16, 2016, file photo, Lisa Gao compares a black iPhone 7, right, with her iPhone 6 at the Apple Store on Michigan Avenue, in Chicago. Apple, Samsung and other phone companies keep coming out with more powerful phones with better cameras and a bevy of bells and whistles. Rather than relegate an earlier model to a desk drawer, consider donating, reusing, recycling or reselling it. (AP Photo/Kiichiro Sato, File)

It's natural to get the phone-upgrade itch when the likes of Apple, Samsung and others keep coming out with newer models. And sometimes your old phone is just kaput.

But what do you do with a serviceable but outdated gadget? Rather than relegate an old phone to a desk drawer, consider reusing, recycling or reselling it. Of course, there's also the option to donate.

Here's a guide for figuring out what you might do with last year's model (or even older ones).

DONATE TO CHARITY

Several charities accept old phones as a donation. But these groups probably won't physically give your old phones to people in need. Instead, they'll often sell your phone to recyclers and keep the money.

A nonprofit group called Cell Phones for Soldiers will take your "gently used" phone and sell it to a recycling company. It will then use the proceeds to buy international calling cards for soldiers so they can talk to their loved ones back home.

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence works in a similar manner. About 60 percent of the phones it collects are refurbished and resold. The money goes toward supporting the coalition. The remaining 40 percent of the phones are recycled, according to the group's website. It pays for shipping if you are mailing three or more phones. The group also accepts other electronics such as laptops, [video game](#) systems and digital cameras.

SELL SELL SELL

Once new models come out, older ones will flood onto eBay and other resale sites, so it might make sense to wait a little. How much money you can make off your old phone depends on the brand and how much wear and tear it's seen.

The resale site Gazelle, for example, is offering \$140 for a Verizon-ready Samsung Galaxy S7 in "good" condition. What does "good" mean? The phone has no cracks on the screen or body, powers on and makes calls, and is free of major scratches or scuffs. A "flawless" phone that looks like it's never been used will land you \$15 more. A 128GB iPhone 7 in good condition, meanwhile, will get you \$305, at least for an AT&T version. For a Sprint-ready phone, it's \$275.

eBay is a bit more complicated. If you're already a seller in good standing and meet certain standards, you may qualify for a "price guarantee" promotion that will get you \$515.26 for the above AT&T 128GB iPhone. Otherwise, eBay says you can get \$280 through the company's "quick sale" program.

The video game retailer GameStop also accepts old phones for trade-in, offering either store credit or cash.

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REUSE, REPURPOSE

Even without cellular service, your old phone will be able to get on Wi-Fi, so you can use it to stream music, post on Facebook or do pretty much anything else you want provided you are in Wi-Fi range. Keep it for yourself, give it to a broke friend, or load it up with kid-friendly apps and games and hand it down to your children.

Or just keep it as a backup in case something horrible happens to your main phone. An old phone can tide you over until you can manage repairs or get a replacement.

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WHAT UPGRADE?

Of course, there's no rule saying you must upgrade your phone each year, as much as manufacturers would like you to.

Is your phone still in fairly good condition? Could you, perhaps, get that cracked screen fixed, delete some videos and apps to free up memory, and clean out accumulated pocket lint in the charging or headphone port? You can try a toothpick or use canned air, but be careful using something made of metal like a paper clip—you could damage your [phone](#).

Then you'd really have an excuse to upgrade.

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